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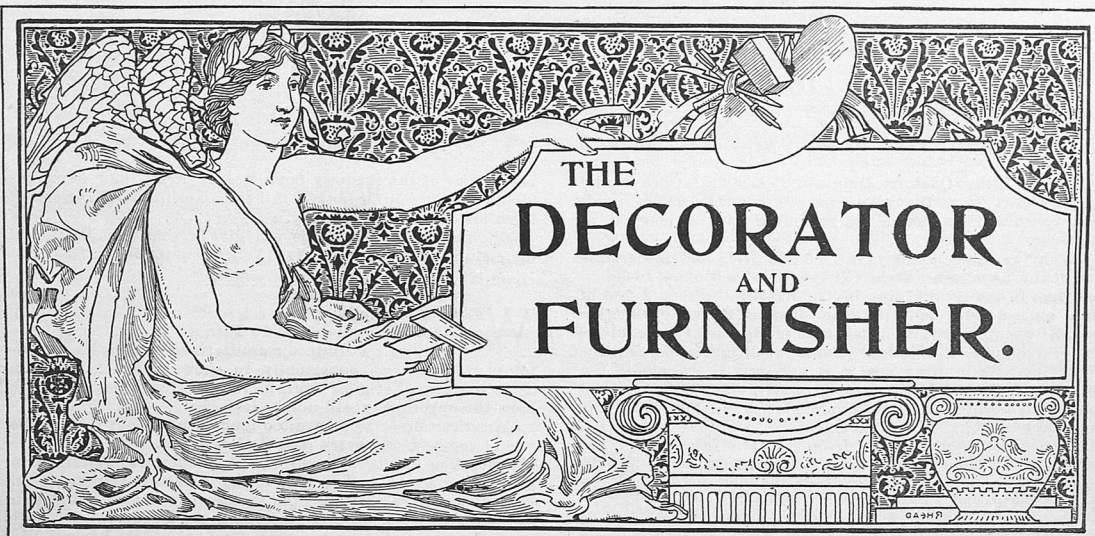
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CONTENTS OF THIS NUMBER.

Art Trades Supplement.—The Second Semi-Annual Exhibit of the Furniture Manufacturers.—C. H. Medicus—The Brooklyn Chair Co.—Formica & Winner—M. F. & F. E. Schrenkiesen—Palmer & Embury—A. Cutler & Son—Stickney & Simonds—C. A. Amino & Bro.—New York Cabinet Co.—M. & H. Schrenkiesen—E. C. Cummings & Co.—Putnam & Co.—Watson & Karsch Mfg. Co.—B. Fitch & Co.—The Andrew Homan Co.—New Haven Chair Co.—A. B. & E. I. Shaw—Frank Rhoner & Co.—S. P. Porter—Phoenix Furniture Co.—Witcomb Metallic Bedstead Co.—Sidney, Squires & Co.—Alden Batchelder—Hayden & Crouch—Reinhold G. Ledig—P. C. Lewis Mfg. Co.—Ferguson & Bro.—The Oulton Mfg. Co.	187-192
Catalogue of Books for Architects, Artists, Amateurs, Designers and Decorators	193
Drawing-Room in the Empire Style	184
Editorials	163
English Basement House, An	182
Flexifold Door and Shutter Co., The	192
How to Furnish a Flat for \$250	By N. S. Stowell 177
Hall Settees, New Designs for	By S. G. Wilkes 180
Home Decoration.—Principles Governing the Arrangement of Bric-a-brac, with Five Illustrations. Illustration of Cosey Corner with Movable Divans	185
Harmony in Tone	By E. H. Slicer 172
Indian Art in Stone and Wood.—Fig. 1, Portion of Stone Frieze; Fig. 2, Band of Kutch Carving in Stone; Fig. 3, A Panel in Kutch Carving in Stone; Fig. 4, Perforated Window in the Buddhist Mosque, Ahmadabad	181
Lincrusta Walton.—Fig. 1, Stairway Dado in Empire Style; Fig. 2, Stairway Dado in Louis XVI Style; Fig. 3, Dado with Border to Match in Lincrusta; Fig. 4, Corner Section of a Ceiling in Rococo Style; Fig. 5, Set of Four Japanese Panels in Lincrusta Relief; Fig. 6, Wall-Filler in Lincrusta in Naturalistic Effects	163
Mural Painting	By F. Maddox Brown 166
Richly Ornamented English Piano, Illustration of	177
Stained Glass Window, A Unique, with Illustration	171
Tapestry Painting—Subject, "An Autumn Idyll"	169
Tiled Fire-place, Illustration of	173
Unfortunate Pier, The.—Designs for Cabinet for Drawing-room Pier, Book-case for Library Pier, Cabinet for Reception-room Pier, and Cabinet for Dining-room Pier	By Edward Lee Young 173
Vieau, C. J. & Co.	168

PAGE

THE boudoir does not date very far back, being but little over a hundred years since the apartment had an individual signification of its own. The invention of such a room belongs to the era of *Le Grande Monarque*, Louis Quatorze, who, as well as his successor, Louis XV, were famous for their victories on the carpet, as well as on the field of battle. It was during this epoch that the fair sex reigned supreme, and the boudoir became a necessary institution, when kings allowed themselves to be ruled by their favorites. "Boudoir" is a French word, and is derived from the verb boudier, to pout, or be sulky. The inference is that the fair lady, in the prosecution of her conquest, would retire to the seclusion of her boudoir to sulk, when the sunlight of royal favor did not shine so brightly as she wished, and, as is well known, the practice of sulking is a very powerful weapon in the hands of a coquette. In the days of Mesdames La Pompadour, Maintenon, DuBarry, and others, the boudoir was really the council chamber of the king, the centre of authority and the focus of government. These ladies added to great physical charms great intellectual ability, and were in reality the rulers of the French nation. Hence a feminine apartment, at once gorgeous and secluded, was a prime necessity in the business of managing kings.

The boudoir, as we understand it to-day, is a lady's sanctum, and in this capacity it is closely related to the master's smoking den, or library. Boudoirs are becoming more and more daintily appointed, and are not only fashioned in the styles known as Louis XV and Louis XVI, but we have also Adam, Japanese and Moresque boudoirs, the method pursued being to incorporate all that is dainty, delicate and refined in whatever style the furniture adopts.

OUR trade designers, both of furniture and fabrics, still continue to revert to French inspirations for their ideas.

The observant decorator will notice this fact upon examining the specimens of furniture on view in our leading furniture stores. It is true there is quite a quantity of Chippendale, Sheraton and Adam furniture also manufactured, but these are simply diluted reproductions of French design. While it may be very profitable to the manufacturers, designers and decorators to continue to turn out work of this kind, we are sure that European designers must be amazed at the apparent lack of inventive artistic ability on the part of American designers and manufacturers. Simply because the age seems only to tolerate the resurrection of old conceptions, the manufacturers decline to strike out into a thoroughly new line of decorative art, and go on turning out Parisian forms.

Even an appropriation of the Italian Renaissance would not be so reprehensible as the mere copyism of the stereotyped French styles. The Italian Renaissance does not fetter originality, and this unrestricted freedom in the work of the old masters should encourage the designer to make use of his own ideas and surroundings as much as possible. This cannot be

THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

said of the Louise Quatorze, Quinze or Siese styles. Once let the designer part from the well known ornaments which mark each epoch and his design will be looked upon as mongrel in character.

What we want nowadays is a simplification and modernization of the Renaissance style. The artist who is about to design furniture in the style of the Italian Renaissance should first of all be quite decided as to the exact phase of the style which he intends to employ. The Renaissance is capable of great diversity of treatment, and while it affords the designer a large scope for the exercise of his fancy, it is necessary to distinguish the several varieties. The elaborate old coffers, clumsy cabinets, and solid quatro-centro chairs are no authority whatever upon the important matters of measurement and outline, and consequently the artist who would design modern furniture in the spirit of the Italian Renaissance style must form his designs in lines which are entirely different from the old remaining specimens of the period.

There is a cast-iron solidity and stupidity about much of the Italian furniture, and many of the larger cabinets are simply architectural monstrosities. Beauty of line is a great desideratum, and this once obtained the ornament will grow out of it in harmonious proportions. In Renaissance carving our artists should refer to nature for their suggestions; just as the Italian artists represented pomegranates, grapes, figs, melons, and other fruits and flowers, we might introduce daisies, morning glories, tiger lilies, honeysuckle, dogwood, the passion flower, and the Virginia tobacco flower, all of which are susceptible to artistic treatment as any of the old Italian flowers. These flowers might be conventionalized in a manner similar to the method by which the Greeks conventionalized the acanthus leaf, and the result would be a strictly American flower decoratively treated in the conventional spirit.

THE great English decorative artist, Walter Crane, recently exhibited a great many of his decorative designs and fine art pictures in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. His collection embraced 153 studies in all, ranging from frolicsome kittens and fantastic floral devices for the decoration of nursery A. B. C. books to such powerful pictures as "The Riddle of the Sphinx," "The Bridge of Life," and other impressive works.

In a series of dainty illustrations, entitled "Flora's Feast, a Masque of Flowers," Mr. Crane's peculiar genius has found congenial scope. The old favorites of garden and field seem to have been materialized into the charming figures that bear their names—the primrose, in her dainty pale yellow gown; the whimsical little Africans, with scarlet poppy frills and headgear; the sunflower, fairly alive with tender spring green and yellow draperies; the pinks with serrated petal garments; the charming yellow lily and chrysanthemum in her crumpled gown, the delicate hyacinths, and most whimsical of all the ox-eyed daisy, the gold calyx forming a crown for a roguish face framed in the white petals.

The artist's book of "Old Songs Set to Pictures," shows such an exquisite sense of color that one is tempted to dismantel a duplicate book and frame the leaves. The visitor was delighted with Mr. Crane's painting, illustration, design and decoration, finding new allurements in everything he executes. The certificate of membership to some "Ministering Children's League," shows symbolic designs of poverty, ignorance, and their kin, while just beyond them haggard faces peer through prison bars and gaunt hands reach threateningly or imploringly through the grates.

Mr. Crane's "Triumph of Labor" is an elaborate drawing designed to commemorate the international labor day of 1891. Socialistic sentiments are emblazoned on the processional banners, while Plenty, in the foreground, looks as if she didn't care whether school kept or not.

A great many pictures have been sold from this collection. The mediæval spirit and atmosphere that pervades so many of Mr. Crane's works have proved irresistible to our patrons of art.

Among other impressive works may be mentioned "Pandora," a strongly conceived emphasis of the tragedy of existence, yet a work more powerful than pleasing; "La Belle Dame Merci," an interesting yet unsuccessful attempt to bring into

being some of the shadowy fantasies of Keats, and numerous idyllic figures call for notice. All these are interesting. Some of them are positively charming.

We understand Mr. Crane will give a similar exhibition of his pictures and designs in New York early in March.

WE recently published the rules and regulations regarding exhibitors at the World's Fair, to be held in Chicago next year. Furniture manufacturers and interior decorators will have an opportunity to show what America can do in the way of original work in interior furnishings, and we hope the opportunity will not be lost.

American decorators have too long been content to play the role of copyists, and every possible European or Oriental style of decoration has been made use of, decorators preferring to give their customers what they loudly proclaim as pure styles, something that saves them from exercising their own brains in the line of fresh departures in decoration.

Just at present there is a craze for Louis XV., Louis XVI., the Empire, and Colonial styles. These styles are copied over and over again until one would think the public would grow weary of environing themselves with decorative motives that strictly belong to a bygone generation. The reason we respect pure styles so much is because the inventors of the various styles respected themselves sufficiently to create something that was expressly suited to their times and needs, and did not fall back upon more ancient styles to save their brains from the labor of devising original work. It is a sign of decorative decay to see our houses decorated exclusively in the bygone styles, without any attempt to modify such styles to suit our modern life, which is totally different to any other kind of life that has heretofore existed on this planet.

A room to be decorated in the Louis XV. style, ought to have the inmates also dressed in eighteenth century attire, and the master of the house should certainly array himself in a silk brocade coat, say in two shades of tea rose. His waistcoat should be of yellow silk damask, with satin kuickerbockers and silk stockings to match. Furthermore, he should wear a powdered wig, and present his friends with a pinch of snuff from a silver snuff box. It is absurd to see a man in a black frock or dress coat, with black pantaloons, dancing the waltz with a modern fashionably attired lady in a Louis XV. drawing-room; but, even if we choose to tolerate modern dress with a bygone environment, there is really no need why that we should adopt the bygone style in all its eccentricities, as well as its good qualities, when we may possess modifications of styles, or the interblending of one style with another, so that each will deprive the other of its extravagances so that the result will be a fresh departure in decoration, and something more nearly conformable to modern life.

All the so-called pure styles are really developments of elements obtained from other styles, even the Greek style being indebted to Assyria and Egypt for many of its characteristic motives.

It is only by the interblending of various antique styles with the Italian Renaissance that we can obtain fresh and original departures that will satisfy the many-minded man of the present century. The Italian Renaissance is the apex of all the European styles, and as the people of the United States are of European origin, we find in the Renaissance a style peculiarly suited to the needs of the American citizen, but which will be modified hereafter into a thoroughly American style of art. This is the consummation that is so devoutly wished for by the best decorators of the country, but before such an event can take place a long era of experiment must necessarily intervene. We can only reach the true American style by a series of fresh departures in decoration that will eventually lead to their crowning triumph. These departures will be a blending of the Renaissance with more highly developed Oriental styles, as, for example, the Japanese Renaissance, the Chinese Renaissance, Hindoo Renaissance, Persian Renaissance, Arabian Renaissance, including American (Aztec) Renaissance.

The World's Fair should encourage a fresh departure of this kind in decorative art, and the furniture manufacturers and decorators of the country should offer six prizes of considerable amounts to be awarded for the best original exhibit in each of the above styles of ornamental decoration.